Education
April 30, 2008

The following statement was issued by the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education. It was also read in the House of Assembly:

Changes Made to Exam Marking Boards and Exam Accommodations for Students

Every year, the Department of Education brings hundreds of teachers to St. John's to participate in marking boards to grade public examinations and CRTs. Marking boards are now being organized for public exams with approximately 22,000 exams written each year.

I was extremely pleased to announce as part of Budget 2008 an additional investment of $150,000 to move these marking boards for the first time beyond the overpass. We saw no need for the boards to be located in St. John's every year, and our intent is to locate them in different communities across the province. This year, the public exams will be marked in Corner Brook.

This progressive step will be of great benefit for communities in terms of economic spin-off, while teachers, some of whom will be joined by their families, spend two weeks in the area. I'm sure my honourable colleagues will agree that such benefits should not be restricted to the St. John's area.

As a government, we are committed to economic activity everywhere and seeking out ways to bring new opportunities to communities across the province. While this may be a modest step, it will nevertheless provide an economic boost for any area where the marking boards are held.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform my honourable colleagues about another change to the public exam program. Acting upon a recommendation of the ISSP and Pathways Commission report, students who require accommodations in the classroom will now be able to use these accommodations when they write their exams. This means, for example, that students who depend on software such as Microsoft Word to successfully complete classroom evaluations can continue to use it when writing public exams.

This change is part of an on-going review of the public exam policy with input from representatives of the school districts, advocacy groups, parents and the Department of Education. This review, as well as an analysis of other pan-Canadian jurisdiction's policies, will be considered in formulating an improved provincial public exam policy.

Our education system is based on equality and accessibility. Our investment of an additional $69.9 million, as announced in Budget 2008 yesterday, builds on $177 million in new investments in the last two years. As a result, we will continue to see improvements in all aspects of our education system, from reduced class-sizes, improved infrastructure and increased programming from Kindergarten to post-secondary and into adult learning.

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